



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Sarin: Frequently Asked Questions

What is sarin?

Sarin is a toxic, man-made chemical agent that poisons the nervous system and disrupts vital bodily functions. It is a clear, colorless, and tasteless liquid that has no odor in its pure form. Sarin can evaporate quickly into a vapor (gas) and spread into the environment. Sarin is also known as GB.

How can people be exposed to sarin?

- Following release of sarin into the air, people can be exposed through skin contact, eye contact or by breathing in the chemical.
- People can be exposed by eating food or drinking water contaminated with sarin or by getting contaminated water on their skin.
- Sarin vapor can stay on a person's clothing for about 30 minutes after exposure. This can increase the number of people who come in contact with the chemical.
- Because sarin vapor is heavier than air, it will sink to low-lying areas and create a greater chance of exposure there.

What are the symptoms of sarin exposure?

People exposed to sarin may develop the following symptoms within seconds or hours of exposure:

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| • Runny nose | • Nausea |
| • Watery eyes | • Vomiting |
| • Small pinpoint pupils | • Abdominal pain |
| • Eye pain | • Slow or fast heart rate |
| • Blurred vision | • Fluctuation of blood pressure |
| • Drooling | |
| • Excessive sweating | |
| • Cough and chest tightness | |
| • Rapid breathing | |
| • Diarrhea | |
| • Increased urination | |
| • Confusion | |
| • Drowsiness | |
| • Weakness | |
| • Headache | |

What should you do if you've been exposed to sarin?

If you think you may have been exposed, leave the area where sarin was released and get to fresh air. If the release occurs outdoors, move away from the area to the highest ground available. If the release occurs indoors, get out of the building. Quickly remove contaminated clothing and wash your entire body with soap and water.

- Any clothing that has to be pulled over the head should be cut off the body to eliminate further contact. Clothing should be double sealed inside plastic bags.
- If eyes are burning or if vision is blurred, rinse with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes.
- If sarin has been swallowed, do not induce vomiting or give fluids to drink.
- Seek medical attention immediately.

How sarin exposure is treated?

Treatment consists of removing sarin from the body as soon as possible and providing supportive medical care in a hospital setting. Antidotes are available for sarin. They are most useful if given as soon as possible after exposure.

How do you know if you were exposed to sarin?

You may have been exposed if you were in the area when a release occurred and you experienced a runny nose, watery eyes, drooling, excessive sweating, and difficulty breathing within minutes of the exposure.

Where is sarin found and how is it used?

- Sarin is not found naturally in the environment.
- Sarin and other nerve agents are used in chemical warfare.

Why is there concern about sarin being used in a terrorist attack?

Sarin evaporates and spreads quickly in the environment. Because it is clear, colorless and odorless it is difficult to detect until people are exposed. Nerve agents are the most toxic of the known chemical warfare agents and can rapidly kill those who are exposed.

Additionally, sarin has been used in terrorist attacks in the past:

- Japan in 1994 and 1995 by the Aum Shinrikyo group.
- During the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

Are pets and other animals susceptible to sarin?

Yes, pets and other animals are susceptible to sarin. If you think your pet or animal was exposed call your veterinarian.